



## **H.R. 53 – Virgin Islands National Park School Lease Act**

### **FLOOR SITUATION**

H.R. 53 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Delegate Donna Christianson (D-VI) on January 1, 2007. The House Committee on Natural Resources approved the bill, as amended, by voice vote on October 10, 2007.

H.R. 53 is expected to be considered on the floor of the House of Representatives on October 22, 2007.

### **SUMMARY**

H.R. 53 authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to lease to the Government of the United States Virgin Islands a parcel of property, from the National Park System (NPS), for the purpose of providing a location for the establishment of a school by the Government of the United States Virgin Islands on the island.

The lease cannot exceed 99 years.

### **BACKGROUND**

The land in question is on St. John Island, which is only 28 miles wide and two-thirds of which are part of the Virgin Islands National Park. There are currently only 2 public schools on St. John and no public high schools. High school children must travel 20 minutes, by ferry, to St. Thomas to complete their high school education. In addition, the population of the U.S. Virgin Islands has been growing rapidly and two schools are not enough to support the current population.

The NPS cannot lease any of the lands that have been designated within the parks system and must therefore be allowed to be leased by the federal government. This legislation handles the legality of the transfer.

### **COST**

According to the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), "H.R. 53 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded

Mandates Reform Act. Enacting the bill would benefit the U.S. Virgin Islands, and any costs incurred by that government would be incurred voluntarily”.

**STAFF CONTACT**

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